



GUIDELINES FOR SCORING OF PROPOSALS

Scientific Merit Review Criteria Guidelines

When assessing the scientific merit of a proposal, the following factors should be considered:

- a. **Significance** – supports/advances the health and healthcare of veterans and the research field in general; addresses important scientific question/area; potential contribution to scientific literature
 - b. **Approach** – incorporates current scientific/theoretical bases; hypothesis-driven; use of appropriate research design/methods for addressing hypothesis; feasibility of methods are clear
 - c. **Innovation** – addresses new concepts and/or gaps in the research area; potential for impact of findings on existing field of research and/or treatment paradigms
 - d. **Environment** – appropriate knowledge/background and resources (e.g., equipment, staff) to ensure completion of project; IRB/IUCAC/Biosafety committee oversight sufficient
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Scientific Merit Parameters

Using the above factors, the scientific merit of a proposal should be assigned a score corresponding to the following:

<i>10 – 15 Excellent</i>	Proposed research addresses important scientific area that currently lacks needed knowledge base. Hypothesis(es) is clearly stated and research design/methodology is appropriate. Research is innovative, representing state-of-the-art science. Potential findings may have a vital role in advancing the health and healthcare of veterans, and the scientific field in general. Resources listed suggest a very high probability of the project's completion.
<i>16 – 22 Very Good</i>	Proposed research addresses important scientific area. Hypothesis(es) is clearly stated and the research design/methodology is appropriate, with a few minor exceptions. Potential findings may have an important role to the health and healthcare of veterans, and the research field in general. Resources listed suggest a high probability of the project's completion.
<i>23 – 28 Good</i>	Proposed research addresses a valid area of investigation. Hypothesis(es) is clearly stated, but research design/methodology contain key flaws that should be corrected. Potential findings may contribute to the health and healthcare of veterans, and the field in general. Resources listed suggest the project could be completed.
<i>29 – 34 Fair</i>	Proposed research requires further preliminary data to warrant investigation as a viable area of research. Hypothesis(es) is not clear and/or research design/methods contain significant flaws. It is not clear how potential findings would contribute to the health and healthcare of veterans, and the field in general. It is unclear whether the resources listed are sufficient to ensure project completion.
<i>35 – 50 Poor</i>	Proposed research does not appear to address an important scientific

question/area. Hypothesis(es) is not clearly stated and/or research design/methodology is inappropriate or contains uncorrectable flaws. Design/methodological limitations hinder any significant conclusions that would contribute to the health and healthcare of veterans, and/or the field in general. Resources listed do not suggest that the project will be completed.

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Scientific Contribution Review Criteria Guidelines

Evaluations of the PI's scientific contribution should be considered within the context of the following factors:

1. **Career Stage** – position title/academic rank; years as an independent researcher.
 2. **National and international recognition/scientific positions** – awards; citations from national and/or international organizations for scientific work; involvement on federal advisory committees.
 3. **Quality of publications** – impact of publications on field, innovation of work. Does the PI publish in peer-reviewed journals that are respected in the field and/or have publications that suggest the PI makes important contributions to the scientific literature?
 4. **Grant portfolio** – federal grants including VA and non-VA, national and regional foundation grants over the past 3 years. Has the PI been successful in competing for research funding and built a portfolio suggesting his/her ability to generate research ideas worthy of funding?
 5. **Percent time devoted to research** – time (% or 8ths) involved in research activities (past and present). Does the PI's scientific products (publications, grants, awards, mentoring, etc.) reflect a level of production consistent with time devoted to research?
 6. **Mentoring of junior investigators** – time involved in mentoring; historical listing of protégés. Has the PI demonstrated a commitment to mentoring individuals who are junior?
 7. **Miscellaneous or extenuating circumstances**
Has the PI documented any significant life events (e.g., significant illness, medical conditions of immediate family, change of academic institution) that may account for lower levels of productivity?
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Scientific Contribution Parameters

Using the above factors, the overall scientific contribution of a PI should be assigned a numerical score corresponding to the following scale and parameters. Reviewers should be aware that scientific contributions might be a reflection of the length of one's research career. **Therefore, evaluation of a junior applicant's scientific contributions should be considered in contrast to expectations of a more senior, established investigator.**

<i>10 – 15 Excellent</i>	For their current career stage and percentage of time devoted to research, PIs have outstanding levels of contribution and track records of research funding. The PI has also consistently contributed to the peer review literature in his/her area of research. Publications include key findings that significantly advance/support the health, healthcare of veterans, or the field in general that have resulted in formal recognition. A more senior PI will have an excellent record of mentoring junior investigators.
<i>16 – 22 Very Good</i>	For their current career stage and percentage of time devoted to research, PIs have an above average level of contribution and track records of research funding. The PI has often contributed to the peer review literature in his/her area of research. Publications include findings that are highly relevant to the health, healthcare of veterans, or the field in general that have received some recognition. A more senior PI will have a solid record of mentoring junior investigators.
<i>23 – 28 Good</i>	For their current career stage and percentage of time devoted to research, PIs have acceptable levels of contribution and track records of research funding that is commensurate with their experience. The PI has occasionally contributed to the peer review literature in his/her area of research. The PI's publications are relevant to the health and healthcare of veterans, and the field in general, but have not received much formal recognition. A more senior PI will have an acceptable record of research funding and mentoring junior investigators.
<i>29 – 34 Fair</i>	For their current career stage and percentage of time devoted to research, PIs have modest levels of contribution and track records of research funding. The PI has seldom contributed to the peer review literature in his/her area of research. The PI has been involved in research that contributes to the health, healthcare of veterans, or the field in general, but such work has not been highly innovative. A more senior PI will have a modest record of mentoring junior investigators.
<i>35 – 50 Poor</i>	For their current career stage and percentage of time devoted to research, PIs do not have an acceptable level of contribution and track records of research funding. The PI has not consistently contributed to the peer review literature in his/her area of research and does not conduct research that appears relevant to the health, healthcare of veterans, or the field in general. A more senior PI will not have a solid record of mentoring junior investigators.